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War Captivity as a Contact Zone: The Case of British Prisoners of War on Parole in Napoleonic France

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Abstract
The existing scholarship on Napoleonic captivity tends to focus on French prisoners of war held in Britain at the time. This article seeks to help redress this gap by drawing upon a range of English and French sources to investigate how British captives on parole experienced displacement in Napoleonic France during up to eleven years of their lives, between 1803 and 1814. The multifaceted relations that prisoners developed with residents and fellow captives offer important nuances for our understanding of Franco-British relations during the period. They also provide an insight into how war captivity formed a 'contact zone' amidst the conflict. Through this case study, the article highlights that the notion of 'contact zone' can provide a helpful framework to further conceptualise histories of prisoner of war experience, even beyond the Napoleonic Wars.

Seventeen months after his shipwreck off the coast of Cherbourg in December 1803, naval purser James Hyslop wrote a letter to his brother in Langholm, giving him news of his life in detention:

> I am quite busy at present working in the Garden, you may be looking out for a pipe of wine by and by … I hope the children have been very good since I went away. Tell them if I hear they have I will bring them something very fine when I return from France.[1]

Hyslop had been made prisoner on parole, owing to his rank in the Navy, which meant that he enjoyed a rather comfortable position. Parole – short for word of honour in French – was granted to trusted servicemen and civilians accompanied by their families, in exchange for a few obligations: they had to pledge not to escape, to attend a daily roll call and to lodge amongst the local population within a perimeter of two leagues.[2] Residing in Verdun – the central parole town for British captives in Napoleonic

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[1] *Shepherd, Sailor and Survivor: The Life and Letters of James Hyslop, RN, 1764–1853*, ed. D. Hyslop Booth (Inverness, 2010), p. 72.
[2] Archives départementales de la Meuse (ADM), Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, 'Règlement du dépôt de Verdun', December 1803.

France – offered Hyslop a chance to immerse himself in the everyday occupations of his French lodgers. His routine now consisted of attending to vineyards and orchards, and also cooking, a pastoral rhythm which stood in stark contrast with his previous duties at sea. Hyslop chronicled this change with amusement in letters to his brother, suggesting:

> You may tell Nanny [his sister-in-law] when I return, I will teach her to cook some nice delicate French dishes; there is one in particular which I have eaten frequently, and which I dare say she will like very much, it is made from an animal called *Grenouille*, besides a number of more dishes quite as nice and savoury.[3]

The *Grenouille* in question had long been associated with the French.[4] No doubt that, once the term was to be translated by 'Nanny' to her children in Scotland, this dish would come as a disappointment. By offering a recipe for frog legs, Hyslop was responding with humour to the previous promise to bring back 'something very fine' from the country of his captors after the war. Yet, the mere fact that he portrayed himself as a frog-eater, 'frequently' and enthusiastically enjoying French food in detention, suggests that his encounter with the enemy was more amicable than expected. His joke and insistence on the 'pleasant' nature of his interactions with the local population do not fit with the more established narrative of naval anti-Gallicism depicted in studies of seafarers' lives during these conflicts.[5] As Jeremy Black noted, 'at a simple level, that of the "Second Hundred Years War", the Navy might appear largely as an anti-French weapon'.[6] Not only the *corps d'armes*, but the individuals serving the Crown were represented as patriotic 'Tars', whose masculine prowess and honour lay in defeating and hating the French.[7]

The case of James Hyslop, along with that of other captives who experienced life in Napoleonic France from 1803 to 1814, provides a fascinating insight into how war captivity could constitute a transformative space, where ideas, identities, and perceptions of enmity were in constant negotiations, and modulated in writings to the prisoners' kin at home. Their situation raises many questions about the impact of coerced mobility, and travel more generally, on how this socially diverse group of British subjects perceived their place in the world. How did they experience displacement in continental Europe, once estranged from their professional world, families, and friends? To what extent did this encounter shape or reinvent preconceptions about their European neighbours? And how did the recipients of their letters at home perceive

[3] *Life and Letters of James Hyslop*, p. 72.
[4] See P. Gerbod, *Voyages au Pays des Mangeurs de Grenouilles: la France Vue par les Britanniques du XVIIIe Siècle à nos Jours* (Paris, 1991).
[5] *Life and Letters of James Hyslop*, p. 67.
[6] *The British Navy and Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. J. Black and P. Woodfine (Leicester, 1988), p. 6.
[7] See M. Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750–1815* (London, 2002); P. Rice, *British Music and the French Revolution* (Newcastle, 2010), pp. 41–44.

their lives abroad? Conversely, how did the French, particularly the post-Revolutionary military and administrative personnel in charge of their surveillance, interact with these British captives? And how did local populations see their lives changed with detainees who became their tenants, customers, acquaintances, if not friends, during the conflict? This article seeks to explore these questions by approaching war captivity as a 'contact zone' that can further enhance our understanding of Franco-British relations during the period.

I

In many ways, war captivity offered a space and a time that could question notions of enmity and national constructs in formation during the period. Franco-British relations in the long eighteenth century are often represented as a 'love-hate relationship' spurred on by constant warfare, confessional differences, and political tensions that made these two nations 'natural and necessary' foes, if not 'hostile others'.[8] A rich vein in scholarship has unpicked the impact of enmity and stereotypes on the construction of French and British national identities during the period.[9] In particular, Linda Colley's *Britons* has emphasised the importance of alterity – a concept borrowed from anthropological studies – in cementing a British national identity during the Georgian era, arguing that Britons 'forged' an image of themselves as distinct from the rest of Europe, particularly through 'constant warfare' against the French 'Other'.[10] The 'imagined community' of Britons, she stated, came to be defined in opposition to the French: a sense of national alterity fuelled by a general attachment to Protestantism and political dissonances with its neighbour's absolutist monarchy.[11] Since the 1990s, the publication of *Britons*, along with other works of the new 'British studies', has generated much debate as to the inner fissures of Protestantism and class differences affecting the meanings and purposes of anti-Gallicism in Britain.[12]

Social and cultural historians investigating transnational commerce have shifted the lens of investigations by looking at exchanges between the two nations during the period.[13] Without disputing Colley's entire

[8] See, among others, J. Black, *Natural and Necessary Enemies: Anglo-French Relations in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1986); L. Colley, 'Britishness and otherness: An argument', *Journal of British Studies* 31/4 (1992), pp. 312–15.

[9] For a summary of this historiography in France and Britain, see R. Morieux, *Une Mer pour Deux Royaumes: La Manche, Frontière Franco-Anglaise (XVIIe-XVIIIe Siècles)* (Rennes, 2008), pp. 17–27.

[10] L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992).

[11] Expression borrowed from B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 2003).

[12] See, among others, J.C.D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal* 43/1 (2000), pp. 249–76; *These Fissured Isles: Ireland, Scotland and British history, 1798–1848*, eds. T. Brotherstone, A. Clark, and K. Whelan (Edinburgh, 2005); S. Conway, *War, State and Society in Mid Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006).

[13] See, among others, M. Rapport, 'Loyal Catholics and revolutionary patriots: National identity and the Scots in revolutionary Paris', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* 2/1 (2008), pp. 51–71.

thesis, they have identified significant limitations in her model. Renaud Morieux, for instance, has convincingly shown how it misleadingly represented Franco-British antagonisms as a *continuum* during what is often termed a 'Second Hundred Years' War', a period of protracted warfare which nonetheless included sixty-four years of peace between the two nation-states. Furthermore, by looking at borders – the fluid frontier of the Channel in particular – a more complex picture emerges, where individual trajectories unravel a history of contacts rather than visceral hostility.[14] Microhistories and bottom-up perspectives on communities that traded with each other during the period highlight that, as Mark Philp puts it, 'the sound and fury of official propaganda often obscure a very different quotidian reality' during these conflicts.[15] More broadly, historians of diasporas have also made great strides in evaluating the profound effects of migrations, particularly of refugees and captured civilians, in prompting cultural transfers and complicating feelings of enmity in modern Britain.[16]

Cultural histories of the Napoleonic conflicts have also disrupted Colley's narrative of a British Francophobia amplified by the wars.[17] Studies focused on the perspectives of combatants, and their individual lived experiences have revealed the intricate social dynamics that unfolded as troops moved during the conflicts.[18] Despite the portrayal of France as Britain's historical rival in the British press, British soldiers' reactions in the field were more nuanced. As the work of Gavin Daly has shown, memoirs of redcoats suggest that when stationed in the Iberian Peninsula, they often had a more positive view of the French than their supposed allies.[19] They admired the professionalism of their army, but also their gallantry, their urban sophistication, and even their anti-religious stance. Campaigns also offered soldiers opportunities for leisure and cross-cultural experiences that can be seen as a form of tourism. Activities such as sightseeing, searching for souvenirs, trying new foods, and engaging in romantic relationships and sex were all part of soldiers' experiences abroad. This openness challenges many of Colley's assumptions about how the Georgians interacted with foreign populations. As Catriona Kennedy and Oskar Cox Jensen note, looking at life-writing and popular

[14] Morieux, p. 170.
[15] M. Philp, 'The British response to the threat of invasion, 1797–1815', in M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon. The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815* (Oxford, 2006), p. 16.
[16] See the work of S. Manz and P. Panayi in *Refugees and Cultural Transfer to Britain* (London, 2013) and *Enemies in the Empire: Civilian Internment in the British Empire during the First World War* (Oxford, 2020).
[17] An excellent review of these can be found in C. Kennedy, 'Introduction', *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 3–6, 202.
[18] See, among others, Matilda Greig, *Dead Men Telling Tales: Napoleonic War Veterans and the Military Memoir Industry, 1808–1914* (Oxford, 2021); Philip Dwyer, 'War stories: French veteran narratives and the 'experience of war' in the nineteenth century', *European History Quarterly* 41/4 (2011), pp. 561–85.
[19] G. Daly, *The British Soldier in the Peninsular War: Encounters with Spain and Portugal 1808–1814* (Basingstoke, 2013).

music from the time complicates the idea that the wars exacerbated Francophobia.[20] Their work has shown that people often viewed the wars as a traditional dynastic feud opposing states and heads of state, 'rather than a conflict between mutually hostile peoples.'[21] Besides, the notion of 'Other' does not quite capture the significance of local identities, and, in Carolyn Steedman's words, the 'little things' that gave people a sense of identity, but also the role that Ireland had in how contemporaries discussed what unified Britons.[22] Collectively, these cultural histories of war have challenged the idea that the loyalist propaganda shaped people's minds and revealed the many contradictions of British society at a time when, in the words of Katrina Navickas, identities continued to be 'multiple, changing, overlapping, and contested'.[23]

The growing scholarship on prisoners of war has the potential to add to this shift in perspective and further explore the ambivalences of Franco-British relations in the late eighteenth century. Historians of war captivity in the twentieth century have illuminated the complex relationships that emerged from detention in the First and Second World Wars, as exemplified in Rafael Scheck's latest investigation of 'love between enemies'.[24] Recently, a body of scholarship has accrued in that direction for the late eighteenth century too. While the work of Erica Charters and Renaud Morieux have illuminated the medical and political challenges that administrators faced when managing the presence of French prisoners of war in British localities and colonies and how these interactions questioned civilian-military relations during the Seven Years' War, Mark Towsey's study of the uses that French prisoners made of the Selkirk library, in the Scottish borders, has highlighted the degree of conversation that could take place between two reading cultures hence forced to cohabit in the following decades.[25] Equally, the work of Mary Isbell, Katherine Astbury, and Devon Cox on theatricals organised aboard hulks, in parole towns and fortresses in Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars has brought to light the enthusiasm that local populations could have for prisoners' performances and how the events – in the texts that they focused on, their *mise-en-scène* and their décor – catered for a variety of attendees, including captives, guards, and local populations.[26] In a similar vein, Anna

[20] O. Cox Jensen, *Napoleon and British Song, 1797–1822* (Basingstoke, 2015); Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 132.
[21] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 9.
[22] C. Steadman, 'Inside, outside, other: Accounts of national identity in the nineteenth century', *History of the Human Sciences* 8/4 (1995), pp. 59–76.
[23] K. Navickas, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798–1815* (Oxford, 2009), p. 10.
[24] R. Scheck, *Love between Enemies: Western Prisoners of War and German Women in World War II* (Cambridge, 2020).
[25] M. Towsey, 'Imprisoned reading: French prisoners of war at the Selkirk Subscription Library 1811–1814', in Erica Charters et al. (eds), *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618–1815* (Liverpool, 2012), pp. 245, 58, 260–61.
[26] M. Isbell, 'The handwritten playbill as cultural artifact: A French amateur theatrical aboard the British prison ship, Crown', *Inquire: A Journal of Comparative Literature* 2/11 (2011) URL:

McKay has suggested that the objects made and sold by French prisoners of war in Georgian Britain were not merely the product of boredom but 'represented sociability, human resilience, and adaptability in the face of hardship', in ways that bring light to the varied lived experiences of war and trading opportunities between enemies in the early nineteenth century. These works on creativity in confinement speak to Catriona Kennedy's study of narratives of prisoners of war in the 1790s and early 1800s, which has highlighted that prisoners' 'reflections on national difference did not stem from a marked Francophobia', not least because France had undergone rapid changes during the revolutionary period to the point of bearing little resemblance to the national foe that had been vilified in British prints in years prior.[27]

Overall, the existing scholarship on Napoleonic captivity tends to focus on French prisoners of war held in Britain at the time.[28] This is partly owing to the sheer number of individuals concerned – 130,000 persons not only including French citizens but also soldiers of other nationalities fighting in Napoleon's legions – a number almost ten times greater than the British held in France at the time. This interest is also due to the numerous and evocative sources French prisoners generated in confinement: published memoirs of detention, such as Garneray's *Pontons*, along with various objects carved in bone, from their food rations, such as mini guillotines, spinning Jennies, ship models, and domino sets to be sold in local markets.[29] There were also philanthropic efforts and political campaigns in Britain to improve prisoner-of-war conditions in the country, with no equivalent initiatives existing in France, which resulted in a greater availability of public sources. Comparatively little attention has been given to war captivity in Napoleonic France, and how the experiences of British captives can further illuminate the

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http://inquire.streetmag.org/articles/40 [Last accessed on 11/ 09/2023]; K. Astbury, 'Whole shew and spectacle': French prisoner-of-war theatre in England during the Napoleonic era', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 14/2 (2021), pp. 194–210; D. Cox, 'Stages of captivity: Napoleonic prisoners of war & their theatricals, 1808–1814' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2017).

[27] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 132.

[28] See, among others, G. Daly, 'Napoleon's lost legions: French prisoners of war in Britain, 1803–1814', *History*, 89/295 (2004), pp. 361–80; E. Lemay, 'A Propos des Recherches Faites sur le Sort des Prisonniers de Guerre Français Pendant les Guerres Européennes (1792–1815)', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, 312 (1998), pp. 229–44.

[29] Historians have heavily relied on the former, a phenomenon which Renaud Morieux and Alan Forest have critiqued. Both have highlighted the need to disentangle the textuality of these printed sources to fully appreciate the editing processes at play in these narratives. These texts are, after all, what Ricœur would term a 'configured time': a textual mediation of a time, sometimes long gone. See A. Forrest, 'Prisonniers de guerre et récits de captivité dans les guerres napoléoniennes', in K. Rance and N. Beaupré (eds), *Arrachés et déplacés. Réfugiés politiques, prisonniers de guerre, déportés (Europe et espace colonial 1789–1918)* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2016), pp. 99–115; R. Morieux, 'French prisoners of war, conflicts of honour, and social inversions in England, 1744–1783', *The Historical Journal* 56/1 (2013), pp. 55–88; P. Ricœur, *Temps et Récit*, 3 vol. (Paris, 1985), III, p. 356; E. Duché, '"A sea of stories": Maritime imagery and imagination in Napoleonic narratives of war captivity', in C. Mathieson (ed.), *Sea Narratives: Cultural Responses to the Sea, 1600–Present* (London, 2016), pp. 47–79.

ambivalences of Franco-British relations during the period.[30] While Michael Lewis's 1960s *Napoleon's British Captives* has unearthed a rich source base of published memoirs written by some of the 16,000 captured civilians and soldiers who were detained in the country from 1803 to 1814, Kelsey Power's more recent examination of the significance of clothing among Royal Navy prisoners exemplifies the usefulness of social and cultural approaches to understand the significance of their detention in Napoleonic France.[31] However, neither make full use of French national and local sources, if any, an absence that limits our understanding of this forced encounter and what it meant for both captives and local populations.

This article seeks to redress this gap, by drawing upon a range of sources in both English and French – including published memoirs, manuscript diaries, theatre plays, and letters, along with inventories of French libraries open to captives, local French newspapers, and police records – to investigate how both captives and their hosts saw their prejudices tested by this coerced cohabitation with an 'Other'. The article explores war captivity in Napoleonic France not merely as a transnational or Franco-British encounter but as an imperial and global 'contact zone' that requires further scholarly attention. Whether civilians or soldiers, captive Britons were travellers and had been so prior to their capture. Looking at their detention as a travel encounter, informed by prior voyages, sheds light on the networks of ideas and perceptions that affected their experiences, beyond a mere Franco-British binary. Whilst a prisoner like James Forbes could describe the French as 'Brahmins', owing to his previous travels in India, others compared their fate to plantation life in British colonies.[32] Hyslop himself had roamed the seas and been stationed at the Cape of Good Hope in the late 1790s prior to his confinement. He was well aware of fellow Scots involved in the East India Company, and commented on their connections at Verdun, informing his brother of the presence of 'a distant relative of Mr Ma1colm's family, her maiden name [was] Petrie, she [had] married in India'.[33] The imperial outlook of these British captives is a powerful reminder that captivity was a passage coloured by past travels within and beyond Europe, and that we cannot write a history of eighteenth-century Britain and France – two 'globophagic' powers as Gillray portrayed them – without considering their empires, and the migrations and imaginations they engendered.[34]

[30] The following study has paved the way for more social and cultural histories of this detention. A. Crépin and V. Cuvilliers, 'Le Discours Anti-Anglais des Autorités: Mythes et Réalité dans les Départements Septentrionaux', in M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815* (London, 2006), pp. 205–16. In *The Society of Prisoners* mentioned below, Morieux does address the British experience in France, albeit to a lesser extent than its counterpart.

[31] Michael Lewis, *Napoleon's British Captives* (London, 1962).

[32] J. Forbes, *Letters from France, Written in the Years 1803 and 1804*, 2 vol. (London, 1806), II, p. 218.

[33] *Life and Letters of James Hyslop*, p. 67.

[34] J. Gillray, 'The plumb-pudding in danger: – or – state epicures taking un petit souper' (1805).

This approach builds on the work of Renaud Morieux, Neil Davie, Robin F. A. Fabel, and Nicholas Guyatt, who have made great strides in considering war captivity in a colonial and global context to show how issues of race and imperialism could transform relations between captives, and between captives and captors during the Napoleonic Wars, especially with the concomitant War of 1812.[35]

The 'contact zone' is a useful concept to approach the significance of this experience of war captivity. Beyond the gendered trope of 'fraternisation', which populates almost every account of detention of any war implying the cohabitation of enemy populations – may that be during the Napoleonic conflicts or the Second World War – this concept allows us to further theorise the encounters generated by detention as multifaceted and multi-layered phenomena. First introduced by Mary Louise Pratt in the 1990s, the notion refers to 'the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations'.[36] This space is marked by potent power dynamics. In this sense, parole detention in Napoleonic France can be read as a 'contact zone' as postcolonial theorists define it, namely a 'social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination'.[37] In detention, this space of interactions was asymmetrical in many ways: first, the privation of freedom – freedom of movement at the very least – and the military subjugation imposed on captives coloured their interactions with administrators in charge of their surveillance; this was coupled with important class and gender differences which marked both captives and their hosts. But what Hyslop's letters suggest is that this interface was not merely a social mirror, reflective of phenomena occurring in France and Britain at the time.[38] Rather, this interface was transformative and performative. His writings suggest that detention induced changing habits: new diets, spaces, and everyday occupations to be told to his kin at home. The space of captivity thus provides a prism through which we can retrieve a diverse array of social adjustments and malleable perceptions

[35] See R. Morieux, *The Society of Prisoners: Anglo-French Wars and Incarceration in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2019); R. Fabel, 'Self-help in Dartmoor: Black and White prisoners in the war of 1812', *Journal of the Early Republic* 9/2 (1989), pp. 165–90; N. Davie, *French and American Prisoners of War at Dartmoor Prison, 1805–1816: The Strangest Experiment* (London, 2021); N. Guyatt, *The Hated Cage: An American Tragedy in Britain's Most Terrifying Prison* (London, 2022).

[36] M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York, 1992), p. 7.

[37] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4.

[38] In her book *Captives*, Linda Colley tends to use prisoners as reflections of broader issues and contexts, rather than as active agents of their detention and encounters with their captors. They are, in her words, 'symptomatic and emblematic bodies', and her 'book uses captive individuals and their tales to investigate and reassess far wider national, imperial and global histories'. Only their writings – their narratives of captivity and the act of writing itself – are considered as retrospectively shaping their diverse experiences. L. Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850* (London, 2002), p. 12.

formed in contact with others. In the words of James Clifford, 'the making and remaking of identities take place in the contact zones'.[39]

Historians of war captivity have used other terms to appreciate the 'paradoxical link emerging from the experience of detention' between captives and captors, and between the captives themselves.[40] Renaud Morieux sees in the negotiations and tensions that took place between French paroled prisoners and their British hosts during the Seven Years War a form of 'social laboratory', where 'people of different status would socialize'.[41] Through their 'intermingling', he argues, one can 'glimpse [at] the repercussions of international conflicts at the level of local communities, small towns, and villages'.[42] In other spaces of the British Empire, Morieux frames eighteenth-century regimes of war captivity as a 'trial', a 'testing of society', challenging both the 'society of captives' and that of their captors, logistically, socially, culturally, and politically.[43] Kennedy talks of war prisons as 'sites of cultural exchange rather than conflict' during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era, while Kelsey Power discusses the material nature of the 'community' of naval prisoners, who modulated their clothing in relation to other captives and their captors in ways that suited their needs.[44] All these point towards considering war captivity as a space of interaction and entanglement, which the notion of 'contact zone' can further refine. Contacts were made not simply between prisoners and their hosts, but among the prisoners, and among their hosts, as local populations interacted with the personnel in charge of the captives' surveillance, national authorities, and those who came to profit from captivity itself (sex workers, moneylenders, merchants, for example). The notion of 'contact zone' has the dual benefit of highlighting that these interactions were multifaceted, asymmetrical, and ephemeral. This framework recognises that these exchanges were experienced and narrated within a situation that was inherently unequal and brimming with complex power dynamics. It also acknowledges the temporary and malleable spaces that this forced cohabitation created – a 'zone' modulated by war, infrastructural and political pressures, changing understandings of the prisoners' social status, and the contacts captivity prompted in a range of spaces and scales (from public sites, like streets and seashores, to the confines of the prisoners' lodgings). The movements and negotiations that underpinned access to parole for British captives in Napoleonic France are apt to show how significant these contacts were in shaping the very contours of this prison regime.

[39] J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Harvard, 1997), p. 7.
[40] Expression borrowed from *Les Prisonniers de Guerre dans l'Histoire: Contacts Entre Peuples et Cultures*, eds. R.C. Caucanas, P. Payen, and O. Abbal (Paris, 2003).
[41] Morieux, 'Conflicts of Honour and Social Inversions', pp. 55–88.
[42] Ibid., pp. 55–88.
[43] Morieux, *Society of Prisoners*, pp. 238–83.
[44] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 134, K. Power, 'Dress, identity, and negotiation by British prisoners of war in France, 1803–1812' *British Journal for Military History* 7/2 (2021), pp. 64–82.

II

The parole status granted to captured Britons in Napoleonic France provides an interesting case study because this form of captivity created a malleable 'zone' of interactions in the midst of a transitory period in modern warfare. Parole was an *Ancien Regime* concept, drawing upon ideas of masculine honour and chivalry, which was refashioned in Napoleonic France.[45] Ideas and feelings of honour did not cease with the French Revolution of 1789, as is often assumed.[46] Rather, this tradition of captivity, based on a word of honour and its attached privileges, retained value. Whilst some essential traits were embedded in a longer history of honourable conduct at war, particularly eighteenth-century practices of parole – including segregating 'honourable' captives, and allocating a perimeter and private lodgings after a ritual of oath-taking – new features emerged: exchanges rarefied, captivity hence became a long-term experience – a decade-long internment in many cases – and not only a military rank, but domestic ties and age became essential to claim this status in Napoleonic France.[47] In Verdun – a fortified city of 9000 inhabitants in the North East of France which was selected by Napoleon to host the majority of British prisoners on parole – honour was redefined as a three-dimensional concept encompassing military, gendered and generational facets. The regulations of the '*dépôt*', as it was called at the time, stipulated that Verdun would gather 'English prisoners of advanced age or accompanied by women and children, and those vested with military rank'.[48] In addition to this, the Napoleonic state ceased to organise systematic cartels, for practical and ideological reasons. On the one hand, Britain did not have civilians to exchange against the 400 civilian British *détenus* – mostly Grand Tourists and merchants captured with their families in May 1803 – and held ten times more French prisoners.[49] On the other, reciprocity was vested with a new economic dimension, as Napoleon insisted that nations should pay for the cost of keeping and clothing the captives on their soil. Long-term internment subsequently became the norm.[50]

Parole turned Verdun into a 'contact zone' where the contours of captivity itself, and who was eligible for this form of detention, were in constant negotiations. This resulted partly from the fact that the local post-Revolutionary personnel, who oversaw the prisoners' surveillance,

[45] G. Brown, 'Prisoner of war parole: Ancient concept, modern utility', *Military Law Review* 156 (1998), 200–23.
[46] Morieux, 'Conflicts of Honour and Social Inversions', pp. 55–88.
[47] Ibid., pp. 61–67.
[48] ADM, 9R2, Minute de la gendarmerie de Verdun, '1 Frimaire an XII' (23 November 1803); Copie du 2 Prairial an XI, Paris, 23 May 1803.
[49] For a breakdown of civilian prisoners' social backgrounds, see M. Audin, 'British hostages in Napoleonic France: The evidence with particular reference to manufacturers and artisans' (M.A. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1988).
[50] P. Wilon, 'Prisoners in early modern European warfare', in S. Scheipers (ed.) *Prisoners of War* (New York, 2010), pp. 39–56.

struggled to identify the social status of British captives and their diplomatic value. The difficulties experienced by French local authorities to 'grapple' with the society of British captives are particularly evident in the regular transfers that occurred between Verdun and non-parole *dépôts*. On paper, Verdun was the central hub for captured civilians with families, elderly captives, and officers; other captured Britons, mostly common sailors and soldiers, were to be confined more severely in eleven Northern fortresses such as the citadels of Valenciennes, Arras, Sarrelibre, Longwy, and the disciplinary *dépôt* of Bitche designed for escapees. In practice, a lot of movement occurred between these sites. Some of these transfers were large in scale and significantly altered the numbers of parolees held in Verdun, which, according to the French secret police records, oscillated between 545 and 1118 men on parole, between 1804 and 1814: at most, an estimated ten per cent of the city's population.[51] These fluctuating numbers resulted from two types of transfers: first, the mass transfers of two categories of initially paroled prisoners (domestic servants and midshipmen) to non-parole *dépôts* in 1805, 1808, and 1809; second, the progressive return to Verdun of these prisoners and other captives initially deemed not worthy of parole, but who were allowed to reside in Verdun, owing to the patronage of other captives who petitioned French authorities to recognise their status as men of honour.

Transfers responded to logistical pressures, as non-parole *dépôts* were repeatedly opened and closed, depending on the context of war. This meant that captives could find themselves in temporary residence as parolees in Verdun. On 12 November 1804, twenty-five merchant captains arrived from Givet, yet fifty-one servicemen were sent to Sarrelibre the following month.[52] In May 1806, the Metz captives – mostly domestic servants transferred from Verdun in 1805 – were sent back again to Verdun before the arrival of a convoy of merchantmen from Valenciennes in June. This was followed by a transfer of eighty-five sailors from Arras in April 1811, following the temporary closure of the *dépôt*.[53] As a result, British prisoners were often on the move. This movement reveals the *ad hoc* nature of their detention, and the malleable nature of parole, as a privilege and a space in Napoleonic France, which brings another light to Catriona Kennedy's argument that during the Napoleonic wars, 'as with POWs in World War I, officers and men inhabited "strikingly different worlds in captivity"'.[54] Whilst parolees clearly enjoyed a comfort prisoners in northern fortresses lacked, parolees did have contacts with them, and there was movement across the *dépôt*s and their 'worlds in captivity'.

[51] Data collected from *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire, Bulletins Quotidiens Adressés par Savary à l'Empereur, 1810–1814*, ed. N. Gotteri, 7 vol. (Paris, 1997); *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire, Bulletins Quotidiens Adressés par Fouché à l'Empereur, 1808–1810*, ed. E. Hauterive, 2 vol. (Paris, 1963–1964); *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire, Bulletins Quotidiens Adressés par Fouché à l'Empereur, 1804–1807*, ed. E. Hauterive, 3 vol. (Paris, 1908–1922).

[52] *La Police Secrète 1804–1805*, I, p. 129, 171, 196.

[53] *La Police Secrète 1805–1806*, II, p. 58, 347, 445.

[54] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 116.

These transfers also resulted from a social selection operated at Verdun by the Commandant of the Place, General Louis Wirion, a *gendarmerie* officer who considered the *dépôt* as a platform to separate the wheat from the chaff amongst those who claimed their right to parole status. The correspondence between Wirion and Fouché, the Minister of Police, bears witness to this process. As early as 1804, Wirion ordered the transfer of a certain 'class' of merchantmen to Sarrelibre.[55] This 'class' was imposed by a commandant who drew a rather arbitrary line amongst merchantmen based on the tonnage of their vessels: above eighty tons, they could aspire to parole; below, they faced confinement with common sailors and soldiers.[56] The mere fact that Wirion created a new social hierarchy for British merchantmen under his surveillance, regardless of existing ranks in Britain, reveals the uneasiness with which a *gendarmerie* officer dealt with class and privileges to be ascribed to the British enemies in Napoleonic France. Trust was in constant flux, particularly for young naval men. The boundaries of parole were elastic, and doubts about the trustworthiness of midshipmen led Wirion to temporarily restrict the freedom granted to parolees: the city gates were shut for several days and midshipmen were confined in the citadel before their mass transfer to non-parole prisons.[57] In 1808 and 1809, two mass confinements followed by transfers targeted midshipmen, who lost their parole status, owing to their 'young age' and a perception that they were the most likely group to attempt to escape.[58] Midshipmen had a rather ambivalent position in Britain; although recognised as officers-in-waiting – they were expected to take the lieutenant examination – their lack of commission meant that the French were reticent to recognise them as officers.[59] Because of their age, but also their dress, they did not look the part. Some got supplies of shirts from local hospitals after shipwrecks, and most arrived literarily threadbare in Verdun, having marched hundreds of miles to reach the prison.[60]

Whether British prisoners were worthy of parole or not could be read on the body. The first impression captives conveyed to local *gendarmes* could determine their parole status. Naval prisoners of the same rank

[55] *La Police Secrète 1804–1805*, I, p. 171, 196.
[56] Ibid., I, p. 216; *Life and Letters of James Hyslop*, p. 74.
[57] Queen's College Library (QCL), Oxford, GB/NNAF/P144289, John Barnabas Maude, 'Journal', 2 and 5 December 1803.
[58] ADM, 9R2, 'Ordre de Police du Général Commandant supérieur en cette Place', Verdun, 1 April 1809. Most attempts at escape concerned young men, particularly soldiers of lower rank and non-commissioned officers; as Catriona Kennedy noted, 'between 1803 and 1811, only twenty-three British officers violated their parole in France', and those who did face serious consequences. In Britain, 'they could be reprimanded and demoted, sent back to France or discharged from the armed forces', and in France, 'parole violators also risked the opprobrium of their peers' still in captivity. Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 120.
[59] See N.A.M. Rodgers, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (New York, 1986); H. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Education for Officers* (Abingdon, 2007).
[60] *Escape from the French, Captain Hewson's Narrative (1803–1809)*, ed. A. Brett-James (London, 1891), pp. 59–60.

were not granted the same treatment, depending on how far their clothes and their bodies had suffered from the physical duress of wreckage and capture. As the case of the wrecked *Rambler* brig suggests, crews in tatters received less regard from their captors on the shore. Caught in terrible weather, and poorly conducted by a half-drunken crew, after capturing two French merchant vessels carrying wine in the Bay of Biscay, the *Rambler* ran aground in the mouth of the River Loire in August 1804. Captured by the local garrison, the crew presented a poor sight. 'We looked like a set of half-starved miserable wretches, instead of British seamen', wrote midshipman Robert James. 'Guards used to exhibit us as fine specimens of English sailors', he continued, 'in throwing a ridicule on our wretched appearance – long beards, half famished, no shoes'.[61] The *gendarmes* hence did not billet them out in taverns but sent the crew to local civil prisons at night. The language used in letters by Wirion and local magistrates – the mayor of Verdun, the prefect, and sub-prefect of the Meuse – reveals how entitlement to parole was often read on the body, authorities referring to whether captives 'appear[ed] full of honour'.[62] Such comments were often made in reference to uniforms and the gait of prisoners, two elements suggesting that, beyond the interrogation and the form prisoners had to fill in when entering the town, they identified honour through clothing and posture. This means that the historian gets to read peculiar stories of impersonation: highwaymen turning respectable, resourceful slave-owners pretending to be accompanied by African princes, whilst other voyagers aped eccentric folly to obtain their release.[63]

We can read these situations as an insight into Napoleonic France, captivity being a mirror of contemporary events and a slice of French society revealing the workings of a post-Revolutionary administration, their understandings of class and honour, along with issues stemming from language barriers in a country at war. This language barrier perhaps explains why sixty-eight American prisoners were held in France in 1807, even though the country was at peace with the United States.[64] This was coupled with an occasional poor grasp of geography amongst clerks at the town hall, who regularly noted that Dublin and Stockholm were 'English cities' in *Etat civil* records, and 'Frenchified' – for want of a better word – the names of British captives, Edward systematically becoming Edouard,

[61] British Library, Add MS 38886; Robert Bastard James, 'The fortune of war, or a ten years captivity in France', 1804–1814. See also William Stephen Gily, *Narratives of Shipwrecks of the Royal Navy between 1793 and 1849, Compiled from Official Documents in the Admiralty* (London, 1850), pp. 158–9.

[62] ADM, 9R2, Rapport du premier adjoint au maire, Varaigne-Perrin, occupant temporairement les fonctions de commissaire de police, au sous-préfet de la Meuse, sur la présence nouvelle des prisonniers anglais à Verdun, Verdun, 26 Frimaire an XII (18 Ded. 1803).

[63] See, for instance, *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire 1806–1807*, III, p. 422 : '*Wirion donne des détails sur ceux de Verdun; parmi eux, Schaw, armateur, emmène avec lui un jeune africain qu'il dit être le fils du roi du Congo*'.

[64] *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire 1806–1807*, III, p. 414, 425.

for instance.[65] Nevertheless, the fact that these American captives were liberated, thanks to petitions drafted by English prisoners in Verdun, highlights the agency deployed by captives in shaping the contours of their reclusion. In this sense, war captivity should not merely be conceived as a social mirror, but as a 'contact zone' where the local populations, particularly, administrators, had to 'grapple with' the intricacies of the English language and British society embodied by the prisoners, who, themselves, deployed agency in claiming their right to parole.

The prisoners themselves influenced the French personnel's understanding of naval ranks, which materialised in constant adjustments to the parole system. British parolees influenced Wirion's segregation through patronage and petitions. Naval officers regularly petitioned for their men to join them as parolees, to reunite the crew of the lost ship in one same *dépot*. These requests sometimes induced large transfers, as evidenced by a successful appeal for the transfer of most common sailors from Longwy to Verdun in 1812.[66] These petitions, if fruitful, could even redefine the restrictions of parole in Verdun. In 1808, several paternalistic and evangelical officers offered their patronage and swore on their honour that midshipmen would be considered 'gentlemen' in Britain and that their parole should therefore be restored. William Story was thus liberated through the patronage of Lieutenant Pridham, who also arranged for him to be given a passport to circulate outside the two leagues of Verdun during the day.[67] Such favour expanded the parole perimeter to the local countryside if not neighbouring cities such as Nancy and Metz, or even Paris.[68] These arrangements based on interpersonal connections became systematised by the French military authorities, which, in 1805, began appointing 'senior officers' to be taken 'collectively responsible' for men of lower ranks at the *dépôt*.[69] Such measures created a new military hierarchy formulated by the local gendarmerie personnel, as they 'grappled' with the intricacies of the British armed forces. Overall, the boundaries of parole were pliable owing to knowledge transfers and negotiations occurring in captivity.

These transnational negotiations were far from being straightforward. They sometimes necessitated conversations with the British State, which is evidenced by the long-winded debates French military authorities had over the provision of subsidies for naval officers detained in the country. The constant re-categorisation of non-commissioned officers and ships'

[65] See, for example, ADM, 2 E 558 (51), Registre d'état civil de la ville de Verdun (1804–1805), entrée naissance no. 80, Samuel Charles Wordenshoilt.
[66] Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, YJ 28, Lettre du Ministre de la Guerre au Commandant Soyer à Verdun, 5 Février 1812.
[67] W. Story, *A Journal Kept in France, during a Captivity of More than Nine Years* (London, 1815), pp. 65–66.
[68] *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire*, III, p. 296; IV, p. 3, p. 177. See also A. Blayney, *Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France as a Prisoner of War in the Years 1810 to 1814*, 2 vol. (London, 1814), II, pp. 154–55.
[69] R. Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity in France from 1809 to 1814*, 2 vols (Liverpool, 1836), I, p. 249.

masters, which the French national authorities struggled to position in their transnational ranking scheme, is illuminating. Considered by the French as '*sous-officiers*' rather than non-commissioned officers, the masters were excluded from the parole system, which led them to reclaim their status as 'gentleman officers' and petition for receiving the corresponding subsidies.[70] In 1806, Napoleon thus reformed the categorisation of 'prisoners who *should* be treated as *sous-lieutenants* under the 350 francs per annum'. However, the list of two hundred eligible captives in Verdun also included 'passengers' from various social backgrounds: doctors, students, tradesmen, booksellers, landowners, clergymen, and the most elusive categories of all, '*gentilhommes*'.[71] Unsatisfied with this categorisation, the British Transport Office intervened in 1808 by publishing a memorandum explaining the Admiralty's decision to 'confer upon Masters of [the] Royal Navy the rank of lieutenant'.[72] But the question of the 'rank' of masters of merchantmen was still debated between the French Ministry of War, Napoleon, and the Transport Office in Britain. The debate only ceased in July 1813 when the French Admiralty accepted a request for 'masters *really* in possession of officer ranks and certificates'.[73] The 'reality' of rank, in absence of documentation attesting the captive's social status in Britain, was a concept the French authorities wrestled with to implement their aid to captives – a financial support which necessitated long negotiations with the British State and the captives themselves.

Overall, these transfers and negotiations suggest that local French authorities had a limited understanding of their British neighbour. Equally, British captives experienced a post-Revolutionary society, which bore little resemblance with the 'protracted cross-Channel feud', against which, according to Linda Colley, Britishness had been forged since the 1700s.[74] Prisoners encountered a transformed society, which had divested itself from the absolute monarchy and Popish traits that had galvanised anti-French sentiment in Britain in the preceding decades. And it was still in mutation: in 1803, while Verdun bore the marks of revolutionary iconoclasm, seventy-one *émigré* clergymen steadily returned to their parishes and refurbished chapels with the help of devotees and local authorities, following the Concordat, hence inaugurating an ambivalent Catholic revival under Napoleon.[75] This episode of Franco-British cohabitation thus raises interesting questions about the impact of travel

[70] ADM, 9R2, Petition entitled 'Prisonniers anglais à Verdun', 1805.
[71] SHD, YJ29, 'Etat des prisonniers de guerre anglais du dépôt de Verdun qui d'après la décision de sa Majesté Impériale du 24 Juillet 1806, doivent être traités comme sous lieutenants sur la pied de 350 francs par an', 'Ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur', Paris, 24 July 1806'; 'Liste des Passagers à traiter comme sous-lieutenants', Verdun, 15 December 1806.
[72] SHD, YJ29, 'Request by the Commissioners for executing the Officer of Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland', London, 1 October 1808.
[73] SHD, YJ29, Adresse au Transport Board, Paris, 28 June 1813.
[74] *Britons*, p. 25.
[75] L. Chaize, *Histoire de Verdun*, 3 vol. (Fremont, 1940), II, p. 146, 168.

and forced cohabitation on constructed perceptions of the 'Other' at this point in time.

III

One set of questions seems paramount: how far were British prisoners and their French hosts familiar with the 'prejudices' analysed by Colley? Did captives think of themselves, and of the French, differently whilst being detained? In other words, what was the life-span of prejudices, when these ceased to be what they are by definition, namely a prior knowledge to be tested by contacts with their neighbour? Memoirs published years, if not decades, after the end of captivity, such as Seacombe Ellison's *Prison Scenes* published in the 1830s, suggest that their stay did reframe views and behaviours. Reflecting on the contacts he made in local French theatres, Ellison noted: 'travelling takes off the vulgar prejudices contracted at English fire-sides; what we have continually before our eyes, no matter how offensive it may at first appear, will, in the course of time be viewed, if not with favour, at least with indifference till at length it loses all its deformity; *il n y a que le premier pas qui coute [sic.]*'.[76] While Ellison's witty comment aimed to amuse his readers, how far did retrospective writing affect his outlook on captivity and his depiction of prejudices, as fading away by prolonged exposure to French society and culture? Looking at letters and newspaper articles that were read and exchanged among prisoners, but also between prisoners and their families at home, and between prisoners and local populations, highlights that this enforced cohabitation transformed people's views *during* detention and that prejudices were modulated and openly discussed in inward-looking conversations about captivity itself.

A closer look at local French newspapers, and their articles about British captives, highlights that access to anti-British prejudices was limited in Lorraine. One newspaper is interesting in that regard: *Le Narrateur de la Meuse*, a weekly periodical created in 1804 by Claude-François Denis, a former clergyman converted to journalism. From the very first issue, the focus of the newspaper was placed on the British prisoners in Verdun and their entertainments. These captives fascinated its editor, who chronicled their activities every month. 'Playing, gambling, horse- and cart-racing greatly appeal to them', wrote Denis in September 1804.[77] In 1807, Denis was still surprised at the scale of the prisoners' social gatherings, describing a 'splendid carnival party', which gathered '300 individuals'.[78] Nonetheless, the idea of a cultural hiatus progressively emerged, as Denis diverted his readers with sensational news about Mr. Chambers losing one of his ears in a bet, or the story of a proud owner

[76] S. Ellison, *Prison Scenes: And Narrative of Escape from France, during the Late War* (London, 1838), p. 25.
[77] *Narrateur de la Meuse*, 27 September 1804.
[78] Ibid., 15 February 1807.

of a mummified human head. Beyond his obvious interest in uncanny and gruesome detail, other practices such as outdoor bathing in the river supported Denis' perception of a cultural discrepancy between the local Verdunois and what he termed the 'amusements of rich idle people'. 'On the 14th of this month', he wrote in 1808, 'some Englishmen, always eccentric, bathed at Verdun, despite the cold and in the open air'.[79]

Although conflating Englishness with aristocratic eccentricity was a trope of French national prints, Denis's study of the social life of British captives in Verdun constructed this representation at a local level. Denis's need to research and explain the expression 'John Bull' to his readers in 1810 – seven years after the arrival of the first British captives in Verdun – suggests that his local readers were not familiar with the national pamphlets and caricatures that had diffused British stereotypes in the previous decade.[80] This suggests that stereotypes were constructed during captivity and that detention actively shaped representations. We can see this in Denis's study of the British 'phlegm' and 'spleen'. From reports on captives' balls and plays, Denis concluded that they had a different sense of humour: 'in every circumstance, even during their moments of gaiety, they keep a phlegmatic air which contrasts with French hilarity'.[81] This judgment was less based on *a priori* prejudices than everyday observations that Denis further researched for himself and his readers. By explaining his findings, Denis further constructed a vision of national differences at a local level. His study of suicide among captives is apt to show this point. As these incidents occurred more frequently, Denis's reports altered into a study of an essentially British romantic sense of 'spleen'. In January 1813, he announced the passing of a British man, who 'found in death an end to his spleen', the spleen in question being presented as the 'national disease' in Britain.[82] 'It has been a long time since one of these insulars last escaped the depot of Verdun in this manner', he ended with dark irony.[83] Denis unsurprisingly denounced self-inflicted deaths; yet, his perception was less confessionally driven than socially bound, as he presented suicides as eccentric 'amusements of rich idle people' to his readers.[84] Although suicide was regularly portrayed as a peculiarly English predilection in Parisian prints of the eighteenth century, Denis felt the need to investigate and explain the matter to his readers, which suggests that the association of ideas was initially unfamiliar to his local audience in Lorraine and needed spelling out.[85]

These stereotypes were in constant negotiation within the newspaper, as the *Narrateur* became a space of dialogue with the prisoners.

[79] Ibid., 18 March 1808.
[80] Ibid., 3 June 1810.
[81] Ibid., 27 September 1804.
[82] Ibid., 21 May 1813.
[83] Ibid., 21 May 1813.
[84] Ibid., 18 March 1808, 5 September 1813.
[85] On the prevalence of the trope in Parisian prints, see John McManner, *Death and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1985).

Denis regularly addressed 'those Englishmen who take or read our newspaper', inviting them to contribute.[86] The captives responded in diverse ways. Some used poetry, as is suggested by a 'Sonnet against suicide' composed in French by William Bienny, a former teacher held in Verdun.[87] The dialogue was not merely concerned with detention and its deadly consequences but its broader political frame. Significantly, Miss Hutchinson detained in Verdun wrote an ode to Napoleon dedicated to Josephine ('Napoleon's Glory'), which was published in the *Argus* and then translated in the *Narrateur*.[88] This suggests that prisoners used the newspaper to their own ends, celebrating the merciful government as a preliminary step to obtain their release. Denis was somehow complicit, notably by publishing their petition to the Electress of Württemberg in 1805.[89] This space of dialogue created an eagerness amongst French readers to know about the prisoners' views on current affairs. In December 1806, a fortnight after the announcement of the Berlin decree in the *Narrateur*, the editor received a request to know more about 'the sensations the declaration of the blockade of the British Isles caused amongst the English prisoners at Verdun'.[90] Denis diligently answered that 'this news seemed to them like a thunderbolt … The interruption of any correspondence with England, makes them fearful of no longer receiving funds from their country, they are already exercising the strictest economy in their expenditure'.[91] Overall, the newspaper itself became a textual contact zone, an open but inward-looking community, where French and British participants reflected and commented upon their cohabitation, their differences, and similarities. Writings penned by prisoners during detention suggest a similar dynamic, as contacts made while on parole challenged parolees' own stereotypes not only towards their hosts but also towards prisoners of different nationalities, backgrounds, and faiths.

First, it is worth noting that British prisoners continued a satirical culture in detention, by exchanging caricatures that they drew themselves, which had the potential to replicate the anti-French tropes studied by Colley. Letters that prisoners sent to friends and relatives about these drawings suggest that while these depictions echoed tropes deployed by famous satirists of the age, they were inward-looking and self-deprecating rather than Francophobe in nature. They adapted tropes to reflect concerns that were specific to captivity, most notably the anxieties that some Anglican and evangelical prisoners shared about hopelessness and alcohol consumption among fellow prisoners. A case in point would be the caricature that Captain Jahleel Brenton drew of fellow captive Reverend Lancelot Lee, a clergyman from Oxford. The latter wrote to his cousin in Shropshire in November 1806 to describe the drawing:

[86] *Narrateur*, 'Avis', 27 September 1804; 4 July 1811.
[87] Ibid., 27 April 1805.
[88] Ibid., 9 July 1806.
[89] Ibid., 28 March 1806.
[90] Ibid., 7 and 21 December 1806.
[91] Ibid., 21 December 1806.

> I was represented sitting by the fireside absorbed in a reverie, the object of which was represented by the prints and papers that were stuck against the wall, viz Great Mogul versus India Company, Berlin in flames, Dresden gone … Buenos Aires retaken, with many other similar notices and manifestos. In the front are seen a group of Blue Devils dancing on Religion, National Faith, Morality, Charity and Truth. Over the chimney a drawing representing the British fleet upset, and on the wall a large bottle labelled 'British Spirits – to be taken when the fit comes on'.[92]

The piece lampooned Lee's despondency in detention, and his efforts to piece together news from the global theatres of the war in French newspapers that prioritised French victories. It did so by using the visual trope of 'blue devils' instilled by satirists such as Gillray, Cruikshank, and Rowlandson.[93] While the trope of the 'devil' in disguise became prevalent in depictions of Napoleon, and by extension, the French, these were often used to depict more specific anxieties.[94] As John Moores notes, 'French characters were employed to directly attack British political figures, while in other instances domestic anxieties were projected onto images of the French'.[95] Here, the focus was very much on Lee's despair and anxieties about inebriation in detention. Lee's response to the piece very much focused on this aspect. 'I confess the satire is good', wrote Lee to his cousin, 'all I wish is that necessity may not oblige us to have such frequent recourse to the bottle that it will not hold out'.[96] This concern stemmed from a shared interest in matters of religion and morality between the evangelical captain, Revd Lee, and his cousin. Brenton's journal and the educational manuals he created for junior members of the Navy show that during his entire service at sea and his captivity, his concerns were about 'the hope of the Navy': the future of new recruits, which, according to him relied on 'sincerity of faith' and 'Christian love', conceived as 'the true and only charity' to ensure discipline amongst young men.[97] In the caricature, the key notions crushed by military losses against the French had therefore a singular meaning for Brenton and Lee, who both saw themselves, and each other, as pious defenders of a sober life on Earth. This had prompted Brenton to form, with Lee and other captured Anglican vicars, a charity network to establish relief and schools for British prisoners in Napoleonic France, the purpose of which was to maintain discipline and morale,

[92] *Napoleon's Prisoner. A Country Parson's Ten-Year Detention in France*, ed. J. Parry-Wingfield (Ilfracombe, 2012), p. 72.
[93] See, for example, Cruikshank's 'John Bull troubles with the blue devils' (London, 1799).
[94] S. Cottrell, 'The devil on two sticks: Franco-phobia in 1803', in R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vol. (London, 1989), I, pp. 259–74.
[95] J.R. Moores, 'Representations of France and the French in English satirical prints, c. 1740–1832', 2 vol. (PhD thesis, University of York, 2011), I, pp. 1, 116–17.
[96] *A Country Parson's Ten-Year Detention*, p. 72.
[97] J. Brenton, *The Hope of the Navy; Or, The True Source of Discipline* (London, 1839), pp. 41–42.

particularly among young naval captives prone to drinking, gambling, and a lack of religious observance while free from service.[98]

Captivity prompted encounters between different religious traditions, and as Gavin Daly has shown, these differences loomed large in many British soldiers' experience of the war in other contexts during the Napoleonic period.[99] Looking at those most concerned by matters of religion, namely captive Anglican vicars, highlights that captivity made them more concerned about atheism than any initial prejudices against French Catholicism. In his manuscript journal, captive young parson John Barnabas Maude confided being keen to attend Catholic events: the Midnight Mass and its 'great fête', the Carnival and its 'very good masked ball' that made it 'a season of great gaiety', the Assumption and its 'splendid firework', not to mention the confirmations at the Cathedral, which he found, in dogma and practice, as 'nearly the same as in England'.[100] The bugbear of the captive clergyman was less Catholicism than the rampant atheism, or agnosticism, that pervaded French society.[101] Reverend Wolfe, held captive with his family in Verdun, perceived it most acutely in the legislation on civil marriage. He considered it a public 'rejection of the truth, and denial of the Saviour', sullying the private faiths of individuals and the French 'national character'.[102] This atheism was perceived as a source of licentiousness, paving the road to 'the demon of infidelity'. Differentiating it from the laudable devotional revival amongst the 'lower classes', Wolfe saw the 'contempt' or 'evas[ion]' of 'the truth' as rife amongst 'persons of the highest authority and distinction in the country', namely French government members, their local representatives and the new elites.[103] Wolfe hence viewed religious observance at Verdun as a social phenomenon as much as a religious practice in and of itself: poor believers as contrasted with elite atheists.

Enforced cohabitation could also reinforce or question the prejudices that captives held about fellow prisoners of diverse faiths, regional identities, and ethnic backgrounds. Captivity bolstered regional identities, which, combined with a fear of espionage among captives, led to tensions amongst them. Cornish, Yorkshire, Welsh, and Channel Island identities and networks were reaffirmed in detention. Prisoners originating from these areas received financial aid from specific local subscriptions, which could be very prescriptive as to how the money, once arrived at Verdun,

[98] E. Duché, 'Charitable connections: Transnational financial networks and relief for British prisoners of war in Napoleonic France, 1803–1814', *Napoleonica. La Revue de la Fondation Napoléon*, 3/21 (2014), pp. 74–117.

[99] G. Daly, *The British Soldier in the Peninsular War: Encounters with Spain and Portugal, 1808–1814* (Basingstoke, 2013).

[100] QCL, MSS 403–04, John Barnabas Maude, 'Journal', 30 August and 3 September 1803, 20 October 1804, 3 July 1805, 3 July 1808.

[101] R.B. Wolfe, *English Prisoners in France, Containing Observations on Their Manners and Habits Principally with Reference to Their Religious State, during Nine Years' Residence in the Depots of Fontainebleau, Verdun, Givet and Valenciennes* (London, 1830), p. 52.

[102] *English Prisoners in France*, pp. 52–53.

[103] See also, Forbes, *Letters from France*, II, p. 233.

should be distributed only among captives of designated areas.[104] As I have argued elsewhere, regional subscriptions used specific banking and trading connections to transmit these monies to Napoleonic France, and did so in ways that reaffirmed regionalism, particularly local identities in maritime communities and in what Colley has termed the 'Celtic fringe' of Britain. These regional efforts generated suspicion among certain captives. Jersey prisoners were critiqued for trading their bilingualism with the local authorities, to the detriment of other captives. Royal Navy Lieutenant O'Brien voiced these tensions against Garree, a Jersey-born interpreter, whom he considered a 'very scoundrel' and 'informer', accusing him of denouncing a boatswain and gunner of his acquaintance to the commandant, as they prepared their escape.[105] Such fear of espionage led midshipmen like Hewson to socialise only within the circles of their captains at the *dépôt*.[106]

Although the term 'British' seems the most appropriate to refer to the forces and civilians secluded in Verdun, the word does not fully capture the subtle and multiple identities that the prisoners held and encountered among fellow parolees, and which led to both opportunities and forms of segregation in prisoners' efforts to socialise with fellow captives. Here, we must distance ourselves from printed memoirs, penned retrospectively or reworked for a British audience after the prisoners' release. As Catriona Kennedy has shown, retrospective writings often framed forced cohabitation as a microcosm of Britain, simply displaced on foreign shores.[107] A case in point would be the 'picture of Verdun' that civilian James Lawrence penned after his release, and which presented the parole zone as a harmonious microcosm, where 'all national distinctions between Irish, Scot, and English ceased, and their only contest was to do the honours of their respective countries on their particular Saint's day with the most hospitality'.[108] Patron Saint's days were popular and open to all captives, yet other forms of sociability could be exclusive. In 1804, the *Narrateur* reported that two clubs were set up by paroled prisoners: one was attended by English captives, the other was solely destined for Irish prisoners.[109] Unlike Irish Catholics, English Catholics became more integrated into predominantly Anglican gatherings while in detention. The manuscript diary kept by Charles Throckmorton, an English Catholic from Warwickshire, shows how much of an opportunity captivity was for the development of his network, with two hundred

[104] 'Charitable Connections', pp. 99–102. See also E. Duché, 'Prisoners of War', in A. Forrest and P. Hicks (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars* (Cambridge, 2022), pp. 93–114.
[105] D.H. O'Brien, *My Adventures in the Late War, Comprising a Narrative of Shipwreck, Captivity, Escapes from French prisons* (2 vols, London, 1814), quoted in *Naval Chronicle*, July–December 1812.
[106] *A Sailor of King George*, p. 238. Equally, Forbes progressively restricted his society. See J. Forbes, *Letters from France*, II, p. 244.
[107] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, pp. 125–6.
[108] J. Lawrence, *A Picture of Verdun, or the English Detained in France* (London, 1810), I, pp. 90–91.
[109] '*Deux clubs sont formés par ces étrangers: l'un compose tout à fait d'anglais d'origine, est ouvert chez Mr. Carron; l'autre fréquenté par les seuls irlandais, se tient chez Mr Concanon, irlandais lui-même*'. *Narrateur*, 27 September 1804.

and fifty-seven acquaintances made at Verdun, as recorded in his daily entries between 1804 and 1807.[110] What appears striking is that both Edward Bolton Clive and Alexander Don, two of Throckmorton's Protestant connections at Verdun, defended the project of Catholic Emancipation following their liberation, which suggests that these cross-religious contacts in captivity were transformative and had significant political outcomes back in Britain.[111]

Did captivity change prisoners' political views, particularly prejudices towards post-Revolutionary France and the Napoleonic regime they were forced to experience, for up to a decade of their lives? Prolonged exposure to local life and *moeurs* reframed perceptions of the French citizen-soldiers. Parolees wrote of their surprise to see differences in character, conduct, and honour between the four servicemen, who successively took charge of their surveillance at Verdun, as commandants of the place. A clear discrepancy emerged between, on the one hand, the good-natured relations captives entertained with Beauchesne and Meulan, both 'gentlemen' in their views and members of the Field Army elevated to the new imperial nobility, and, on the other hand, the animosity prisoners nurtured against Wirion and Courselles, both members of the *gendarmerie*, whom prisoners referred to as 'gross and brutal … the darling child[ren] of Jacobinism'.[112] Prisoners demonstrated these changing views in writings but also in collective actions. In 1813, hundreds of captives attended Beauchesne's funerals and raised a subscription to erect a monument in his honour. 'Nearly the whole body of the English, attired in full uniform or deep mourning, attended the funeral', wrote Boys, 'thus showing that it matters not in what country a good man is born, for reason will dispel all prejudice, and constrain even his enemies to venerate his virtues and his memory'.[113] His successor, Meulan, was equally praised for his career as 'a gallant soldier' and received a sword as a collective mark of esteem from the captives in 1814.[114]

As Stuart Semmel has argued, British attitudes to Napoleon and his regime could be quite varied and variable.[115] This ambivalence crystallised in the contact zone of Verdun, most notably among the civilians captured in 1803. For most of them, their detention resulted from their interest in witnessing post-Revolutionary France; thus, Napoleon generated both

[110] Warwickshire Record Office (WRO), Throckmorton Papers, CR 1998/CD/Drawer 8/2, 'Memoranda', 15 January 1804–10 May 1808.

[111] On Clive and his time in Verdun, and the influence this had on his and his son's politics, see M. Escott, 'Edward Bolton Clive (1765–1845), of Whitfield', History of Parliament Online, URL: https://historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/clive-edward-1765-1845 [Last accessed 20.03.2024].

[112] See, among others, *Prisons Scenes*, p. 225.

[113] Similar accounts in the *Narrateur*, 4 April 1813. See E. Boys, *Narrative of a Captivity, Escape, and Adventures in France and Flanders During the War* (London, 1863), pp. 290–2.

[114] Ibid., p. 292.

[115] S. Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, 2004). Oskar Cox Jenson has also shown how popular songs and ballads conveyed more positive views of Napoleon in Britain than is often assumed. O. Cox Jensen, *Napoleon and British Song, 1797–1822* (Basingstoke, 2015).

curiosity and distress, as the embodiment and cause of their misfortunes. The manuscript diary entries of Maude, mentioned above, illustrate how detention exacerbated these conflicted views. While in December 1804, Maude marvelled at the 'splendour of the coronation of Bonaparte', the town's illuminations and *Te Deum* for the occasion, he was shocked to read his address to George III in the *Moniteur* the following February, noting the disrespect of addressing the British monarch as his equal: 'Bonaparte styles the King "*on frère*"'. On 17 August 1805, he wrote: 'Bonaparte's ambition and perfidy are unbounded – Europe will never be tranquil till he is no more', a position he revised on 19 October, after the battle of Ulm, when he divulged his admiration for Napoleon's ambitious strategies: 'Bonaparte is certainly a wonderful general and moves his army in a wonderful manner'.[116] Similar vacillations occurred in 1808, when the movement of marching troops made distant theatres of war a tangible reality in Verdun. 'I saw Bonaparte very distinctly three different times', he noted with enthusiasm, commenting on the 'great preparations to receive him' in the city, before adding: 'General Wirion presented him a petition from the English *détenus*, which he received and promised to answer. I hope to God it may be successful, but my confidence is not very great'.[117] This last example suggests that parole generated specific spaces that were conducive to direct contact with not only the French authorities and key figures some prisoners had longed to see, but also with people of various backgrounds, which could, in turn, lead to social and cultural exchanges that could deeply and long-lastingly influence those who interacted in these spaces.

IV

The 'contact zone' of war captivity could be seen as a series of intersecting spaces, where change occurred through negotiations, adjustments, humour, co-creation, and cultural and knowledge transfers. In Verdun, these spaces included, amongst others, lodgings, hospitals, libraries, theatres, and burial sites, which were discussed in writings to French residents and the prisoners' kin at home. This section highlights how each respectively complicates our understanding of Franco-British relations during the period, and how they reveal the long-lasting consequences they had for both captives and their hosts.

Parolees had to seek private lodgings among the residents, which turned these shared households into sites of cultural and knowledge transfers.[118] Eating rituals changed because of everyday contact. Whilst Charles Throckmorton changed his eating habits, depending on the serving times of local inns, he was proud to convert his landlords to having tea on a weekly basis.[119] Commonplace books also suggest that captives gathered

[116] QCL, GB/NNAF/P144289, Maude, 'Journal', 17 August and 19 October 1805.
[117] Ibid., 26 July 1807.
[118] ADM, 9R2, 'Règlement du dépôt de Verdun', December 1803.
[119] WRO, CR1998/CD/Drawer 8/2, 30 January–26 May 1804, 5 October 1804.

extracts of newspapers, books, songs, notes on local plants, or recipes to 'get rid of bugs' given by their landlords, which reinforces the idea that parolees entertained amicable relations with their hosts.[120] Some, like Ellison, went as far as saying that they whiled the time away 'rather pleasantly' with their landlords.[121] However, the comfort they enjoyed varied, depending on their financial means, and travelling experience. Once landlocked in the Meuse, naval officers and petty officers mimicked the sociability of their 'wooden world'.[122] They recreated 'messes' and kept quarterdeck rituals, as is suggested by the cohabitation of officers and midshipmen of *HMS Proserpine* in Captain Otter's apartments in Verdun.[123] The term 'mess' implies the continuation of naval sociability ashore, but these habits had to be adjusted, as they often relied on French domestic servants and British women to 'manage matters', including the daily tasks of sourcing victuals, cooking, and laundry work.[124] Wealthy civilian detainees had a different experience. For them, detention offered a chance to socialise with the French elites, who proved equally eager to partake in their activities. The captives' races and balls offered to the newly returned *emigrés*, such as the Lalances, the chance to reappear on the social stage alongside the imperial administration, and deploy, as sportsmen, aristocratic honour in leisure activities.[125] John Spencer Stanhope, of Cannon Hall in Yorkshire, received a warm welcome from the Le Vaillants at the Chateau de Ligny. There, he experienced firsthand the French nobility's efforts to reinvent themselves, after the Revolution, by adopting a new domesticity in their castles.[126] His stay also contributed to a fusion of aristocratic hunting traditions. While the Le Vaillants introduced him to wolf-hunting, their practice was influenced by Spencer-Stanhope's fox-hunting techniques.[127]

Long-lasting cultural transfers burgeoned in these domestic spaces, especially when individuals needed to learn each other's language. Not all prisoners were able to converse in French before their capture; sailors, in particular, had to acquire grammar books *en route* to Verdun.[128] Self-education was encouraged, and midshipmen hired private tutors

[120] WRO, CR 1998/CD/Drawer 81B.
[121] See, amongst others, S. Ellison, *Prison Scenes: and Narrative of Escape from France, during the Late War* (London, 1838), pp. 18–9; *Life and Letters of James Hyslop*, p. 67.
[122] Expression borrowed from N.A.M. Rodger.
[123] E. Proudfoot Montagu, *The Personal Narrative of the Escape of Edward Proudfoot Montagu: An English Prisoner of War, from the Citadel of Verdun* (London, 1849), p. 12.
[124] G.V. Jackson, '"Damn'em, Jackson, they've spoilt my dancing" 1809–1812', in D. King (ed.), *Every Man Will Do His Duty. An Anthology of First-Hand Accounts from the Age of Nelson 1793–1815* (London, 1997), p. 280.
[125] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Interrogation of Charles-Joseph Migor by the *préfet*, 1 December 1811.
[126] On the new domesticity of the aristocracy during the First French Empire, see Margaret Darrow, 'French noblewomen and the new domesticity, 1750–1850', *Feminist Studies* 5/1 (1979), pp. 41–65.
[127] *The Letter Bag of Lady Elizabeth Spencer Stanhope*, ed. A.M.W Stirling, 2 vol. (Milton Keynes, 2004), I, p. 249.
[128] Story, *A Journal Kept in France*, p. 16.

in French, music and dancing in their lodgings.[129] With lesser means, John Wingate, from Portsmouth, entered the local *collège* and won a prize in Latin.[130] Equally, landlords studied the rudiments of English law and language, particularly to facilitate their commerce with British customers.[131] A haberdasher, like Madame Chatillon, could get private tuitions from her tenant; others familiarised themselves with the captives' language via 'logogriphs' in the *Narrateur*.[132] By offering tuition to local merchants and their children, British prisoners left lasting marks on French households. Dillon, for instance, gave English lessons to the daughter of Madame Chatillon, to whom he was a customer. After his departure, the daughter sent him a letter, in English, congratulating him on his return home.[133] Although separated by the peace, certain prisoners kept contact with their former landlords. Henry Randals, a naval lieutenant, corresponded with his former landlord, Monsieur Lemarque, thirty years after his liberation, in 1845, revealing to him that he had 'always cherished a kind feeling towards the inhabitants of [his] town'. The letter was accompanied by a donation of '50 francs for the benefit of the poor in Verdun'.[134]

Parolees wrote of their surprise at having much in common with the local populations regarding views of the Terror. Sharing rooms with French landlords offered opportunities to study the history of Verdun and the neighbouring town of Varennes-en-Argonne, where Louis XVI had been arrested. This enabled captives to place themselves in another national history. The letters James Forbes sent to his sister reveal his sense of being part of a recent revolutionary past. He frequently questioned his French landlords on their experiences of the Revolution, playing, as it were, the part of an oral historian. He asked them about the inflation, which he recorded in a detailed table of prices of goods in Verdun, between 1789 and 1804, which he then transmitted to his sister. He learnt about the '*Vierges de Verdun*', twelve women executed for having brought sugared almonds to the King of Prussia's tent, during the siege of the city in 1792; a story mythicised in poems and songs. He also empathised with the guillotined relatives of his landlords – Henrietta, Helena, and Agatha Watrin – whose tales of suffering became his own. Along with other anecdotes about Revolutionary France and 'its present state', these collected stories of revolutionary suffering legitimised the publication of his correspondence in England in 1806.[135] As David Hopkin's work on

[129] *A Sailor of King George. The Journals of Captain Frederick Hoffman R.N. 1793–1814*, eds. A. Beckford Bevan and H.B. Wolryche-Whitmore (London, 1901), p. 238; D.H. O'Brien, *My Adventures During the Late War*, 2 vol. (London, 1839) I, pp. 94–95; *Escape from the French*, p. 66.
[130] *Narrateur*, 15 September 1813.
[131] *Le Narrateur*, 9 October 1808.
[132] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Letter of the *sous-préfet* to the *préfet*, Verdun, 21 June 1810; *Le Narrateur de la Meuse*, 10 November 1804.
[133] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Letter of the *sous-préfet* to the *préfet*, Verdun, 21 June 1810.
[134] AMV, uncatalogued box, 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Letter from Henry Rendals to Marc Lemarque, 19 August 1845.
[135] Forbes, *Letters from France*, I, p. 252.

the '*Vierges de Verdun*' has shown, the Terror had divided the city between staunch revolutionaries and disgruntled residents, in ways that still deeply affected the city ten years after the event.[136] The residents' willingness to impart such stories suggests something of their attitude to the recent Revolutionary past, that some long-lastingly took issues with the Terror and found a sympathetic audience among their British hosts, often within the privacy of their homes.

Intimacy and sex in lodgings also led to 'ongoing relations', to use Pratt's words.[137] Forty one Franco-British marriages were registered in the city's civil records. The majority of these unions involved either the daughters of captives' landlords as the brides or landlords themselves as witnesses.[138] In addition, 296 births involving British prisoners were recorded by the municipality.[139] The captives' presence had a significant impact on the local demographics, as it resulted in doubling the number of illegitimate births. This was both a direct and indirect effect of their presence, as the *gendarmes* in charge of monitoring the captives also fathered children during their stay.[140] These records suggest that only seventeen children lost contact with their British fathers, after the end of the war. Interestingly, recognitions of paternity in captivity did not follow the patterns identified by Lisa Zunshine in Britain during the period; at Verdun, captive fathers seem to have recognised their children regardless of their gender: fifty-one per cent of the 'foundlings' were male and forty-nine were female.[141] In 1819, five years after the dissolution of the parole *dépôt*, the *Narrateur* welcomed the return of prisoners with their Franco-British families in the city. Fourteen made their way back, together, in August 1819. 'Some English families came to settle in Verdun and its surroundings', wrote Denis; 'it is believed that far more will follow suit'. He saw this as the result of a 'fear of imminent and serious troubles in England, and the advantageous prospect of our French country for the captives who so long resided here'.[142]

A year later, in 1820, a local doctor named Madin expressed a different view, which showed 'ongoing' concerns about the legacy of detention on the life of the city. In a medical pamphlet, he lamented how the presence of prisoners had transformed the morals and health of the inhabitants, by increasing sex work and venereal diseases in the area. 'My fellow citizens',

[136] See D. Hopkin, 'Sieges, Seduction and Sacrifice in Revolutionary War: The "Virgins of Verdun", 1792', *European History Quarterly*, 37/4 (2007), pp. 528–47.
[137] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.
[138] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 2 E 558 (50–60), Etat civil de Verdun, 1803–1814, 11 vols. This is further evidenced in the private papers of a prisoner named William Hamilton now available in Verdun. Musée de la Princerie (MPV), Verdun, 81.1.106, 81.1.219, 81.1.468, 81.1.469, 2006.0.25.1-2006.0.25.33.
[139] ADM-Bar, 2 E 558 (50–60), Etat civil de Verdun, 1803–1814, 11 vols.
[140] ADM-Bar, 2 E 558 (56), Etat civil de Verdun, 1810, entry 150; 2 E 558 (58), Etat civil de Verdun, 1812, entry 151.
[141] L. Zunshine, *Bastards and Foundling: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century England* (Columbus, 2005). ADM-Bar, 2 E 558 (50–60), Etat civil de Verdun, 1803–1814, 11 vols.
[142] *Narrateur*, 20 August 1819.

he wrote, 'seek pleasures, and welcome strangers with confidence … I would say on this subject that the prolonged stay of English prisoners of war at Verdun was detrimental to this city. These opulent hosts spread with their guineas a luxury which caused an unfortunate attack on morals'. While cases of venereal diseases had risen in recent years, Madin was pleased to note that: 'since the departure of the English, the number of public girls has greatly diminished; moreover, they are subject to frequent visits which stop the evil at its source.[143] While enforced bodily inspections on sex workers became more common during the period, and institutionalised with regulationist and criminalising policies in both France and Britain in the following decades, this last example suggests that the promiscuity induced by captivity led to changing medical practices and views on the health challenges brought by sex work in the city.

During detention, hospitals facilitated the sharing and exchange of knowledge between prisoners and their hosts. Captive physicians, such as Moir, volunteered in French hospitals to provide free vaccination and cataract operations on the local population, at a time when such procedures were in their infancy in France.[144] Only twenty in 1806, the number of British doctors practicing in Verdun multiplied after the Russian campaigns, when the French army brought back typhus to the city. Amid the epidemics in 1813, Bazennerye, the director of the hospital, requested that four British naval surgeons stay permanently in Verdun. The hospital, he wrote, would be 'much embarrassed, if [they] did not have them now, when all the medical personnel [were] indisposed by the task at hand'.[145] The humanitarian efforts of British doctors were celebrated, the mayor frequently holding banquets and formal ceremonies for any prisoner saving inhabitants from a certain death by disease, fire, or drowning.[146] British surgeons saw this as an opportunity. Detention provided a case study for surgeons, who, like John Bunnel Davis, employed his time studying asphyxia, premature burial, and juvenile diseases. In 1806, he published a medical pamphlet in Verdun entitled *Projet de Règlement Concernant les Décès, Précédé de Reflections*, which was discussed in the local newspaper.[147] These 'reflections' influenced his career and his later project, to establish a 'Universal Dispensary for Children' in London in 1815.[148] These medical exchanges, beyond martial

[143] J. Madin, *Essai Sur la Topographie Médicale de la Ville de Verdun et de Ses Environ* (Paris, 1822), p. 15, 18.
[144] Archives municipals de Verdun (AMV), uncatalogued box 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Letter from Dr Moir to the mayor, offering free vaccination and weekly consultations to French residents suffering from typhus, Verdun, 1812.
[145] AMV, uncatalogued box 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Note from the director of the hospital in Verdun to the mayor of the town, 1813.
[146] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Letter by the Minister of Defence to the prefect of the Meuse, Paris, 19 September 1811.
[147] J. Bunnel Davis, *Projet de Règlement Concernant les Décès, Précédé de Reflections* (Verdun, 1806).
[148] I.S.L. Loudon, 'John Bunnell Davis and the Universal Dispensary for Children', *British Medical Journal* 1 (1979), pp. 1191–4.

antagonisms, lay at the core of the cosmopolitan education many British doctors had received before their detention, in Paris and Montpellier, in the case of Davis.

Parolees had an equally profound effect on reading facilities in the city, by co-creating, with local Catholic monks, a Franco-British subscription library. The local Benedictines were strong personalities and committed to cosmopolitan erudition.[149] Given this context, it is perhaps not surprising to see the enthusiasm with which former friars – such as Dom Cajot, Dom Ybert, and Dom Demangeot – interacted with British captives through the exchange of books. As early as 1804, Dom Demangeot rented out his house and his personal library to prisoners.[150] In 1805, he also loaned items from his former order's library to the prisoners' 'Upper Club', which gradually became a circulating library.[151] In 1806, these arrangements were formalised in a transnational creation: a Franco-British subscription library, for which the prisoners themselves created a bilingual catalogue now available in Verdun's *bibliothèque d'étude*.[152] Its current location bears witness to the significance of this inventory: the project was effectively the first municipal library in the city.[153] Tasked with gathering confiscations made during the Revolution, Dom Demangeot appealed to the generosity of the prisoners to write the aforementioned preliminary inventory, containing 1502 books, classified in seventeen literary categories.[154]

Co-creating this reading facility fostered a religious openness, with lasting effects. This inventory shows that despite religious differences, predominantly Protestant captives and their Catholic hosts maintained cordial and mutually beneficial relations. Although the collection was initially managed by former Benedictine monks, they did not try to convert captives through these texts. This openness contrasts with the better known proselytising initiatives of the Foreign Bible Society among French prisoners detained in Britain at the time.[155] At Verdun, the exchange of books offered 'a transnational social space'.[156] They were not

[149] G. Michaux, 'La Vie Intellectuelle dans les Abbayes Bénédictines de Metz au XVIIIe Siècle', *Mémoires de l'Académie Nationale de Metz*, 165/6 (1984), p. 97.
[150] M. Sorlot, *La Vie en Meuse au Temps de Napoléon Ier* (Metz, 1998), p. 81.
[151] *A Country Parson's Ten-Year Detention*, pp. 12–13.
[152] *A Catalogue of Books Belonging to the British Subscription Library, Place de la Cathédrale* (Verdun, 1806).
[153] As other municipal libraries in France, that of Verdun was founded because of the revolutionary confiscations of the clergy's and *émigrés*'s collections between 1791 and 1792. Dom Cajot, Dom Ybert, and Dom Demangeot were in charge of collecting and classifying 32,721 volumes to be gathered in a public edifice during the First French Empire. Bibliothèque d'Etude de Verdun (BEV), 'Notice sur l'Histoire de la Bibliothèque de Verdun' (22 September 2011); *Bulletin du Bibliophile et du Bibliothécaire*, ed. L. Techener (Paris, 1865) ; J.E. Godefroy, *Bibliothèque des Bénédictins de la Congrégation de Saint-Vanne et Saint-Hydulphe* (Abbaye Saint-Martin, 1925), p. 64.
[154] BEV, MSS1810, 'Copie du catalogue imprimé des livres de la bibliothèque de Dom Demangeot, bénédictin, ancien bibliothécaire de la ville de Verdun (Meuse) 1804–1814', p. 134.
[155] In 1807, the British and Foreign Bible Society commissioned 7000 copies of a pocket-sized edition of the New Testament, in French, for distribution among French prisoners in England. See *Summary Account of the Proceedings of the British & Foreign Bible Society*, IV (London, 1808), p. 14.
[156] Thomson, Burrows and Dziembowski, *Cultural Transfers*, pp. 65–67.

only read and exchanged, as they were, but they were also transformed when the captives translated them. Gold, for instance, translated writings on mountaineering, and the 'physiological research' of Bichat, which he published in Britain after his liberation.[157] We do not have documents that would provide insights into borrowing mechanisms within this library. Still, one thing is clear: the books selected for the subscription speak to the publications favoured by French paroled prisoners in Selkirk during the Napoleonic Wars, as studied by Towsey; they, too, contained mostly travel narratives and works of 'useful knowledge' that could help prisoners better understand the society of their captors and develop their career prospects after their release.[158]

Theatre also led to transformative contacts. The captive's theatricals were open to French influences, either through the presence of a local audience, or through the contribution of French actors on stage. This is particularly evident in the hybrid performance that was staged in honour of the Prince of Wales in 1805. The *Courrier* reported that 'a little piece adapted to the occasion was performed by Englishmen. It was intermixed with French parts, which were performed by the regular actors of the theatre'.[159] These occasions offered a space of 'cultural transfers' throughout North-Eastern France.[160] *La troupe de Metz* settled in Verdun in 1806, following the arrival of British prisoners, and changed the opening hours of the local theatre to coincide with British dining times.[161] In 1807, the mayor of Verdun noted that the 'comedic troupes from Metz', 'swearing by the English and the English alone', dedicated specific shows to prisoners in the city.[162] They also invited a series of colourful entertainers to come and perform, including *la compagnie de Nancy*, Parisian map-makers, bearded women, tongueless men, and the 'incombustible Spaniard'.[163] The timings of the plays often coincided with the captives' races – the first horse races to take place in Verdun – during their 'Season', which reimagined the everyday of the local population.[164]

These changes, in what Bourdieu would term the 'social times' of Verdun, did not raise consensus.[165] They alarmed the mayor. When the *compagnie de Nancy* opened their roulette, he expressed concerns that the prisoners' gambling habits could spread among residents.[166] 'The

[157] J.A. Nixon, 'British prisoners released by Napoleon at Jenner's request', *Proceedings of the Royal History of Medicine* 811/32 (1939), pp. 49–53.
[158] Towsey, 'Imprisoned Reading', pp. 241–61.
[159] Quoted in Lawrence, II, p. 246.
[160] Concept borrowed from Michel Espagne. See also *Cultural Transfers: France and Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century*, eds. A. Thomson, S. Burrows, and E. Dziembowski (Oxford, 2010).
[161] Sorlot, p. 84.
[162] 'Les comédies de Metz ne jurent que par les Anglais'. AMV, uncatalogued, 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Letter from the mayor of Verdun to the prefect, 26 germinal an 12 (16 April 1804).
[163] Sorlot, p. 80.
[164] BEV, 70960-S2[6], 'Programme des courses de Verdun', 15 June 1812.
[165] *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture*, ed. N. Brown and I. Szeman (Oxford, 2000), p. 230.
[166] AMV, uncatalogued, 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Letter from the mayor of Verdun to the prefect, 26 germinal an 12 (16 April 1804).

inhabitants of Verdun are not fortunate enough to afford entertainment expenditures … most of them play to emulate the English', he wrote, himself well-acquainted with the establishment.[167] The issue was compounded by the fact that, by becoming the landlords of captives, inhabitants of various walks of life also became *rentiers*. This, for the mayor, raised further concerns about the potential gentrifying effects of the presence of British prisoners in the city, creating a 'rampant trend of wanting to enrich oneself without working'.[168] The Revolution and a series of bad harvests encouraged many inhabitants to seek profit in lodging captives.[169] Whilst 'farmers increased the price of food … town-dwellers rent[ed] and [sold] them expensive apartments, which went from 30 to 80, if not 100 Francs per month; the cost of living [rose] accordingly', recorded the local magistrate.[170] Renting rooms to prisoners was a lucrative trade that complicated expectations that residents would facilitate the surveillance of their tenants out of sheer patriotism. The local authorities initially tried to place the onus on landlords to police British tenants, but with limited effect.[171] Landlords 'do not want to receive *gendarmes* in their homes', reported Courselles.[172] Overall, tensions between residents and local authorities, and between prisoners and residents, often stemmed from financial matters, rather than visceral national enmity, something that was reflected in the plays performed in the city.

Most plays mocked the social changes and the financial tensions that captivity prompted. Two prisoners – Charles Throckmorton and Reverend Maude – diligently recorded, in their respective diaries, their attendance to plays in Verdun.[173] Comparing their attendance over sixteen months suggests three important elements. First, the prisoners mainly staged Revolutionary and sentimental farces in vogue in both France and Britain during the period.[174] Second, the plays selected resonated with the current detention, such as *Les Dettes* (The Debts), *Le Locataire* (The Tenant), and sometimes directly portrayed prison life. Whilst prisoners ridiculed their unlucky petitions in *A Parody of the Petition*, French *gendarmes* also took up the pen to lampoon captives and captors. This suggests a third element: the importance of humour, what Karen Horna

[167] AMV, uncatalogued, 'Les Anglais à Verdun', Police investigation report, 25 Thermidor an XII (13 August 1804).
[168] Quoted in Sorlot, p. 27.
[169] Forbes, *Letters from France*, II, p. 238.
[170] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Report of Varaigne-Perrin to the *sous-préfet* of the Meuse, Verdun, 18 December 1803.
[171] ADM-Bar, 9R2, 'Ordre de Police du Général Commandant supérieur en cette place', Verdun, 1 April 1809.
[172] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 9R2, Letter of Courselles to the prefect of the Meuse, Verdun, 4 January 1811; 'Ordre de Police', Verdun, 7 January 1804.
[173] QCL, GB/NNAF/P144289, John Barnabas Maude, 'Journal', 1803–1806; Warwickshire Record Office (WRO), Charles Throckmorton papers, CR 1998/CD/Drawer 8/2, 'Memoranda', 1802–1805.
[174] On theatre in the French provinces, see C. Triolaire, *Le Théâtre en Province pendant le Consulat et l'Empire* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2012).

terms a collective 'humour identity' in captivity, which connected both parties.[175] A good example could be found in the vaudeville penned in 1805 by Chaillou, a *sous-officier* of the 25th regiment of infantry. He entitled the piece *Le Retour de la Course, ou les Anglais à Verdun* (Race returns; or, the English in Verdun).[176] With the help of a local musician, he had it published in Verdun and Paris. The plot relied on a comic inversion: the saddler Duval dressing up as an Englishman to seduce the daughter of a miserly magistrate. As the local newspaper noted, the play ridiculed both sides: 'we do not know what judgment the *Verdunois* and the English have on this; but it seems that none should be flattered to be depicted, for the former, as rapacious schemers, and the latter as gullible gluttons'.[177] By deriding both 'gluttons' and 'schemers', none could take offence. Self-derision could, in this sense, be cohesive. And this is how the *Narrateur*'s editor seemed to interpret it. Yet, this is assuming that all would access the joke in the same way. Not all captives had a good command of French, nor did they and their French hosts share the same satirical references, as was suggested above. Jokes themselves could be inclusive or exclusive, depending on the performance itself – tones, gestures, costumes would all influence the audience's interpretation of the scene. Without a trace of the multiple reactions the play inspired, we find ourselves at risk of what Jonathan Rose has termed the 'receptive fallacy'.[178]

Lastly, burials provided another space of contact, which generated forms of co-creation between communities affected by war captivity. The town hall recorded the deaths of 254 British prisoners at Verdun, between 1803 and 1814.[179] The number was proportionate to the local mortality rates.[180] These deaths give us an insight into the contemporary state of medicine and the violence of detention. And this is how they have been perceived.[181] However, one element has received little attention: how funerals and reports on death could form a contact zone, where identities and senses of enmity could be refashioned. British captives were to be buried locally, sometimes to the ignorance of their kin at home. Letters arrived late, which explains the significance of the press in announcing such deaths. In Britain, families sometimes copied *verbatim* obituary articles on the plaques that they commissioned for the absent dead. This was the case for Dr John Jackson, for whom a brass plaque was erected by his grieving father in the parish of Kirby Stephen, in Cumbria, in 1807.

[175] S. Freud, 'Humor', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 9 (1928), pp. 1–6; K. Horna, '"Stalag Happy": South African prisoners of war during World War Two (1939–1945) and their experience and use of humour', *South African Historical Journal* 63/4 (2011), pp. 537–52; L.D. Henman, 'Humor as a coping mechanism: Lessons from POWs', *International Journal of Humor Research* 14/1 (2008), pp. 83–94.
[176] B. Chaillou, *Le Retour de la Couse, ou les Anglais à Verdun, Vaudeville en Un Acte* (Verdun, 1805).
[177] *Narrateur de la Meuse*, 26 February 1805, 9 May 1805, 16 July 1805.
[178] See J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London, 2001).
[179] ADM, Bar-le-Duc, 2 E 558 (50–60), Registres d'état civil de Verdun, 1803–1814, 11 vols.
[180] J. Tulard, *La Vie des Français Sous Napoléon* (Paris, 1978), pp. 97–107.
[181] D. Houmeau, 'Les Prisonniers de Guerre Britanniques de Napoleon 1er' (PhD thesis, Université de Tours, 2011), pp. 277–84.

The epitaph was taken from an article in *The Times*, which was itself a translation of a 'short tribute' made in a Parisian newspaper, probably the *Moniteur*, which described Jackson's Franco-British funeral in Verdun.[182] A ceremony had been organised by the local masonic lodge, the *Franche Amitié*, to lament the passing of a 'young captive', whose home was not one country but a universal fraternity.[183] They emphasised his 'premature death', quoting *Romeo and Juliet*.[184] What appears striking is that the lodge chose to mark his death with the construction of a 'cenotaph', which made the burial a celebration of an empty tomb.[185] Although Jackson's remains were interred in the parish of his captive lodgings, his death was thus marked in three places: in Verdun and Cumbria, and the universal non-geographical home of the cenotaph, where he was to meet 'the Creator'.[186] This burial reveals the level of co-creation that could occur in mourning rituals and the significance of cosmopolitan ties, of medicine and freemasonry, in shaping Franco-British relations during the war. Attendance to funerals also changed perceptions. Always keen to study the captives, Denis devoted substantial articles of the *Narrateur* to make sense of British funeral rites, meticulously analysing Anglican customs, from the homily to the 'Glass and Cake'. His conclusions were sympathetic to the plight of prisoners and the work of captive vicars, whose approach he deemed 'similar to that of Catholic priests'.[187]

A local-scale approach, as exemplified by this case study of parole detention at Verdun, unravels the complexities of encounters between enemy populations during the Napoleonic Wars, and, more broadly, the intricate and fluctuating nature of Franco-British relations at the time. But war captivity prompted more than an encounter; it created a 'contact zone'. While the term 'encounter' is closely linked to Pratt's framework, the notion is 'often framed by oppositional logics', a duality between two sides. Using such a prism would position prisoners against their hosts, British people against French people, Protestants against Catholics, as two distinct groups divided by the war. As this article aimed to highlight, this perspective offers limited aperture onto the complex relations and situations that individuals faced, when affected by parole detention at Verdun, between 1803 and 1814. Besides, while relational, 'not all encounters are *two-way*'. As Helen Wilson notes, 'by contrast, Pratt's use of the contact zone is concerned with meaning-making *on both sides*'. 'It is a zone of multiple encounters and other forms of relation', she notes, 'where multiple beings grapple with each other

[182] *The Times*, 7 February 1807.
[183] *Procès-Verbal des Honneurs Funèbres Rendus par la Loge de la Franche Amitié, à l'O.·. de Verdun, Meuse. Au T.·. C.·. F.·. John Jackson … Décédé à Verdun, le 2 Janvier 1807* (Verdun, 1807).
[184] *Honneurs Funèbres*, pp. 6–8.
[185] *Honneurs Funèbres*, pp. 4–5, 29.
[186] *Honneurs Funèbres*, p. 26.
[187] *Narrateur de la Meuse*, 15 August 1806.

through ongoing interaction'; 'in the contact zone, we might see the first surprise of encounter give way to something else'.[188]

Drawing on a variety of sources in both English and French, the article aimed to stress that the exchanges that developed during war captivity were interactive, at times improvisational, and brimming with intricate power dynamics, as different individuals tried to derive meaning from the situation, from all sides of this experience. These fostered a variety of adjustments not only among prisoners and their families at home but also between prisoners and their hosts, and among their hosts themselves. The French administration and the local newspaper had to navigate the intricacies of British society, and make sense of social and cultural differences. Captured Britons also faced the challenge of their own society, cohabiting with other captives with diverse social backgrounds, financial means, travel experience, faiths, and identities. Equally, residents had to 'grapple' with the arrival of fellow nationals, as captivity brought *gendarmes*, sex workers, and theatre troupes into their midst, which also led to new contacts in and out of the city. Forms of co-creation, appropriation, and translations entangled the lives of all those impacted by war captivity, which the notion of 'contact zone' can help us better appreciate. Seeing parole in Verdun, and other instances of war captivity beyond the Napoleonic Wars, as a 'contact zone' can also help us understand the importance of the spaces that were 'produced' during war captivity.[189] This article has focused on specific places that are of particular importance to parole, such as lodgings, hospitals, libraries, theatres, and burial sites. However, other places could offer equally valuable avenues for further research, such as kitchens, streets, markets, ships, fields, rivers, and seashores. Overall, the 'contact zone' framework illuminates the profound effects of the negotiations, transformations, and 'ongoing relations' that took place when war forced a variety of individuals to cohabit for years, if not a whole decade of their lives.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflict of interest.

PEER REVIEW

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[188] See H. Wilson, 'Contact zones: Multispecies scholarship through *Imperial Eyes*', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2/4 (2019), pp. 712–31.
[189] Expression borrowed from H. Lefebvre, 'La Production de l'Espace', *L'Homme et la Société* 31/32 (1974), pp. 15–32.